



THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

Issue 15

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THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

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ASSALAMU ALAIKUM!

Dear Readers,

The editor and staff of the Islamic Bulletin hope all of you had a very Happy Eid! There are lots of changes going on here at the Bulletin which we are very enthusiastic about. Some of the things we are working on is a web site for the Bulletin which will enable you to see back issues of the publication on-line with links to related sites, upgrading our systems and data base, new articles and topics, an expanded Kid's Corner, a new area called Technology Review in which we will take a look at various Islamic related software or web sites.

We have brought you our regular subjects such as Dietary Laws of Islam...this time "Split Pea Soup, Anyone?", Kid's Corner, Cook's Corner with some recipes we hope you will use and enjoy, Women In Islam featuring a very interesting woman, Rumaysa bint Milhan, the Last Sermon of the Prophet (pbuh) which is stunning in it's simple yet all-encompassing message, a call to help for foster children greatly in need of good loving families, a very stimulating article in Science and the Quran, discussing "The Big Bang" and how modern discoveries in Science correlate precisely with verses in the Qur'an, a wonderful perspective on Angels, the new "Technology Corner" covering Islamic software, a reprint of an article from Newsweek about Muslims in America, and an interview we are very proud to bring you in "How I Embraced Islam" by Imam Abdu Kadr. This gentleman can serve as an example to all of us in faith. He tells in his moving story how one can change a life headed in the wrong direction through faith in Allah and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to a life of integrity and honor. Additionally, we have included "The Wisdom of Luqman" with advice to his son that transcends time and culture...advice all of us would like to impart to our children.

We are also sending out an appeal to our readers to help us spread the word of Allah to the many prisoners across the country who are in need of Qur'an's and other Islamic materials. We are currently sending this Bulletin to approximately 1,700 men and women incarcerated in American jails who have asked for our assistance in learning about Allah and the message of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

We hope our readers will enjoy our modest efforts to spread the word of Allah through this newsletter. With all the 'construction' going on at the Bulletin, we want to be sure you are receiving your copies of the Islamic Bulletin, so please make sure you are included on the mailing list by completing the back page and sending it to us.

Additionally, in response to all of you out there who have expressed enjoyment in this publication, we thank you. Please feel free to use anything you find in these pages. Many people have asked us if they can reproduce these writings and our resounding answer is YES! May the blessing of Allah be upon you all.

Thank you from the Staff of the Islamic Bulletin.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear Editor,

Assalamu Alaikum,

I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoy reading the Islamic Bulletin. I have been following it now for a couple of years. I have used it to introduce new Muslims and non-Muslims alike to Islam. The fact that you do not incorporate any 'politics' in your publication really helps us all understand 'Islam' without any other issues involved.

You seem to have articles for all levels of understanding. The variety of topics is always a nice surprise too. Only one

request I would like to make. For those of us that are not Arabic speaking, could you please offer more translations of Arabic words used in the articles? This will not only make some of the text easier for us all to understand as, well as providing an opportunity to learn.

I accepted Islam about two years ago and with the help of the Bulletin, I have learned so many things about this beautiful gift! I live in an area where there are very few Muslims so the contact with an Islamic community through the newsletter is really helpful.

I do have a few questions though that perhaps you could address in future issues. Forgive me for the questions if they seem stupid, but I really don't know and can't seem to find the answer anywhere else in the literature that I have.

1. What exactly is the Ka'ba? I've seen it in pictures covered with a big cloth. What is inside? What is the significance of all the pilgrims going around it during Hajj? Are there certain prayers said? If one wanted to make Hajj, where would you find out how to do it? It seems complicated.

Enclosed please find my contribution for your great newsletter... it is well worth it and I really enjoy reading it!

Best regards,

Sarah Hindle

Billings, MT

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Dear Readers,

The Islamic Bulletin receives a great number of requests for Qur'an's and other Islamic materials from people incarcerated in jails and prisons all over the country. At times like these, many of the inmates have the first opportunity in their lives to contemplate their spiritual identity. If any of our readers would like to help coordinate this project and get some of these requests answered we would really appreciate it.

If we could get a few people to work together on this project, it would only take a few hours per week and be a wonderful chance for dawa.

It would require compiling the mailing list and organizing the sending of the appropriate materials to the person or facility asking for help. Some of the work could be done at home and some would require actually packaging the Qur'an's and literature and getting it mailed out. Please contact us if you have a few hours to spare for the sake of Allah and the good of your own souls. -- Thank you.

"Whoever recommends and helps a good cause becomes a partner therein: and whoever recommends and helps an evil cause shares in its burden: and Allah hath power over all things." (Quran 4:85)

"It is not required of thee (O Apostles) to set them on the right path but Allah sets on the right path whom He pleaseth. Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls and ye shall only do so seeking the "Face" of Allah. Whatever good ye give, shall be rendered back to you and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly." (Quran 2:272)

Dear Brothers/Sisters,

Assalamu Alaikum. I was reading your February 1997 issue of the Islamic Bulletin and I came across the story about Brother Khalid Abdullah who had been lost as a child. I related to this as I believe I lost my only child. The mother of my child embraced Islam completely after the baby's conception. We met in Smyrna, GA in the early '90's while I was running from the police in Florida. We were together a couple of months before I was shot and left again to avoid the police. I haven't seen either of them since that time.

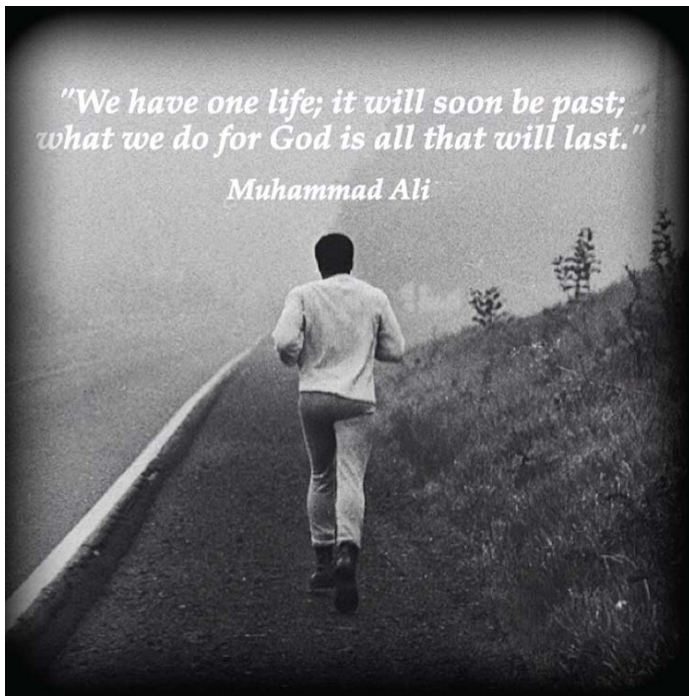
The last time I spoke with her was a few months after we parted and she told me she was married and living in a Muslim community in Alabama. I do not wish to cause her or her husband any problems, but I would really like to know about my child (Inshallah). I would like to be able to see and help raise him/her. Again, I do not want to cause any difficulties for them, but I would like to be a part of my child's life. Everytime I make Salat, I say a Du'a for him/her, the mother and stepfather.

May Allah forgive me if I am wrong and may He guide me if I am right. I have learned so much since I accepted Islam, and one of those things are: "Boys make babies, Men take care of their children". I hope that someone out there can help me and that Allah will guide me. At the time I was known by my fathers name of Akili Watu Muhammad. I pray that Allah, my father and everyone else will forgive me for all the lies, crime and sin I committed.

May Allah bless all the Brothers & Sisters of the Islamic Bulletin. Assalamu Alaikum.

Abdkalia Shahid (aka Gary L. Smith)

NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE FEATURES MUSLIMS



Newsweek Magazine printed an article by Carla Power about the new generation of American Muslims who are practicing Islam with greater visibility and fighting the stereotypes of Muslims. The children of Muslim immigrants who came to America in the '60s are coming of age. Both pious and modern, they are the future of the faith.

In El Cerrito, Calif., Shahed Amanullah knows it's time to pray, not by a muezzin's call from a mosque minaret, but because his PowerMac has chimed. A verse from the Koran hangs by his futon. Near the bookcases-lined with copies of Wired magazine and Jack Kerouac novels-lies a red Arabian prayer rug. There's a plastic compass sewn into the carpet, its needle pointing toward Mecca. At the programmed call, Amanullah begins his prayers, the same as those recited across the globe-from the Gaza Strip to Samarkand. In his goatee and beret, 30-year-old Amanullah wouldn't remind anyone of Saddam Hussein or a member of Hizbullah, the sort of Muslims who make headlines. He has never built a biological weapon, issued a fatwa or burned Uncle Sam in effigy.

"You think Muslim, you think Saddam Hussein, you think ayatollah," says one Muslim-American twenty-something. Not after meeting Amanullah. A native Californian, Amanullah grew up running track, listening to Nirvana (the music group) and reading the Koran. He is a member of a burgeoning subculture: young Islamic America. The children of the prosperous Muslim immigrants of the '60s and '70s are coming of age, and with them arrives a new culture that is a blend of Muslim and American institutions.

Online and on campus, in suburban mosques and summer camps, young American Muslims are challenging their neighbors' perceptions of Islam as a foreign faith and of Muslims as fiery fundamentalists or bomb-lobbing terrorists. That image problem may be this generation's biggest challenge in the New World. Within hours of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, Muslims were prime suspects. "You'll die," was one of the printable messages left on mosque answering machines around the country.

America's Muslims are not only taking on stereotypes, they're taking on the status quo. As it was for Christians and Jews before them, America is a laboratory for a re-examination of their faith. America's

Muslim community is a quilt of cultures: about 25 percent are of South Asian descent, Arabs represent another 12 percent, and nearly half are converts, primarily African-Americans.

U.S. society allows them to strip away the cultural influences and superstitions that have crept into Islam during the past 1,400 years. By going back to the basic texts, they're rediscovering an Islam founded on tolerance, social justice, and human rights.

Some 6 million strong, America's Muslim population is set to outstrip its Jewish one by 2010, making it the nation's second-largest faith after Christianity. Richer than most Muslim communities, literate, and natives of the world's sole superpower, America's Muslims are intent on exporting their modern Islam. From the Mideast to central Asia, they'd like to influence debate on everything from free trade to gender politics.

At home, it is a generation committed to maintaining its Islamic heritage while finding a niche in the New World. America's 1,500-odd mosques are spread from Alaska to Florida. Muslims pray daily in State Department hallways, in white-shoe corporate law firms and in empty boardrooms at Silicon Valley companies like Oracle and Adaptec.

Last year Muslim organizations made life miserable for Nike when the company marketed a shoe with a design resembling the name of Allah in Arabic. After protests, Nike discontinued the style and started sensitivity training for employees. In Washington, the American Muslim Council lobbies on issues from school prayer to the Mideast peace process.

"We're learning to use our clout," says Farhan Memon, a Muslim and 27-year-old partner in Yack!, a multimillion-dollar Internet publishing business. Clout doesn't come without confidence, says Manal Omar, a Muslim woman raised in South Carolina. Tall and leather-jacketed, with a trace of Southern drawl, she explodes any stock image of the crushed and silent Muslim woman. In high school, she played basketball in hijab-the Muslim woman's head covering ("my coach nearly freaked"); at college, she won national public-speaking prizes. Friends thought she should become a stand-up comic. Instead, Omar went into refugee relief. In her off hours, she's working on a series of books for Muslim-American teenagers-"a sort of Islamic 'Sweet Valley High'," she says.

If fighting stereotypes is American Muslims' biggest battle, it is women who are on the front line. Raised playing touch football and reading Seventeen magazine, women are returning to the Koran to discover whether Islam sanctions the veils, seclusion and silence that many Muslim women endure. (Short answer: no.) In Afghanistan or Saudi Arabia, wearing a veil is the law. In Savannah, Ga., or Topeka, Kans., it's a statement.

"For some young women, the veil in America works a bit like the Afro during the blackpower era," says Mohja Kahf, a professor at the University of Arkansas. Amira Al-Sarraf, 34, a teacher at an Islamic school in Los Angeles, explains: "I don't have men flirting with me. I enjoy the respect I get."

At her wedding four years ago, Amanny Khattab wore an Islami-ceil under her translucent lace tulle one. She remembers the "living hell" of her freshman year at Farmingdale High School on New York's Long Island

"The week before school started, I bought all the cool stuff-Reebok sneakers, Guess! jeans," recalls Khattab. "I wanted to look just like everybody else, but with the scarf." It didn't work. But enduring all the cracks-"towel-head," "rag-head"-made her tough.

"Non-Muslim women think I'm oppressed because I wear too much?" says Khattab. "Well, I think they're oppressed because they wear too little."

That willingness to challenge convention is revitalizing a religion that many think has stagnated since the Middle Ages. Today a reformation is afoot. Muslims worldwide are working to square a faith founded in Arabia with modernity. Debates rage: Is Islam compatible with Western-style democracy? With modern science? With feminism? American Muslims, wealthy, wired and standing on the fault line between cultures, are well positioned to bring a 13-century-old faith into the next millennium.

The United States is arguably the best place on earth to be Muslim. Multicultural democracy, with its guarantees of religious freedom and speech, makes life easier for Muslims than in many Islamic states in the Middle East. It's an idea they'd like to export. U.S. Muslim social organizations send money and medicine to beleaguered Kashmiris and Bosnians. The Web site of the Minaret of Freedom Institute, an organization devoted to "promoting the establishment of free trade and justice," has links to the Islamic University of Gaza. "The U.S. Constitution describes the perfect Islamic state," says Muhammed Muqtader Khan, who teaches American politics to Muslims. "It protects life, liberty, and property."

Growing Muslim-American political consciousness may be the surest sign of assimilation. While their parents may have been happy to sit on the sidelines and pine for the Old World, the new generation realizes that to protect its rights as Americans-and Muslims-it has to speak out. Some mosques educate their communities to be more politically assertive, registering voters and holding programs on how to be an active PTA parent. Freshly minted Muslim lawyers are joining other ambitious young politicians in Washington. "When people say we'll never have elected Muslim-American officials, I say, 'Hey, those are the same things they said about a Catholic named Kennedy running for president,'" says Suhail Khan, a 28-year-old congressional staffer. Muslim and Arab groups have protested against airport-security profiling, which they say unfairly targets them as potential terrorists.

In the 1996 election, three times as many Muslims supported Bill Clinton as Bob Dole. The White House has not forgotten. This year the First Lady threw a Ramadan party in the marble-and-gilt Indian Treaty Room in the West Wing. Hillary Clinton's talk-which touched on everything from peace to democracy to the trials of being a beleaguered minority-drew fervent applause. Long after the First Lady left, guests loitered, munched baklava and humus and took snapshots of one another. Having made it to the White House, it seemed, they didn't want to leave.



Why does the figure of Ottoman Sultan Suleiman (1494-1566) of the Ottoman Empire appear above the House Chamber door, US Capitol building in Washington DC?

Answer: The 23 marble relief portraits depict historical figures noted for their work in establishing the principles that underlie American law. Sultan Suleiman was also known as Kanuni, The Lawgiver.

Editor's Note: What is Islam's presence in the United States?

It is almost impossible to generalize about American Muslims: converts, immigrants, factory workers, boxers, doctors; all are making their own contribution to America's future. This complex community is unified by a common faith, underpinned by a countrywide network of a thousand mosques.

Muslims were early arrivals in North America. By the eighteenth century there were many thousands of them, working as slaves on plantations. These early communities, cut off from their heritage and families, inevitably lost their Islamic identity as time went by. Today many Afro-American Muslims play an important role in the Islamic community.

The nineteenth century, however, saw the beginnings of an influx of Arab Muslims, most of whom settled in the major industrial centers where they worshipped in hired rooms. The early twentieth century witnessed the arrival of several hundred thousand Muslims from Eastern Europe: the first Albanian mosque was opened in Maine in 1915; others soon followed, and a group of Polish Muslims opened a mosque in Brooklyn in 1928.

In 1947 the Washington Islamic Center was founded during the term of President Truman, and several nationwide organizations were set up in the fifties. The same period saw the establishment of other communities whose lives were in many ways modeled after Islam. More recently, numerous members of these groups have entered the fold of Islam. Today there are about six million Muslims in America.



Muhammad Ali is known by his trademark statement "I am the greatest!" This was not a sign of arrogance. He is still the greatest heavy weight champion of all times. He was asked by an interviewer how he balanced his humility as a Muslim with this statement and Ali replied "Allah is the Greatest; I am just the greatest boxer." He was a pious person and showed utter humility and always gave credit to Allah for his victories. Ali is the only celebrity to have turned down the offer to have his name placed on the Walk of Fame in Hollywood. He so revered the Prophet Muhammad (S), that he did not want to have people stepping on his name and thus is the only celebrity to have his star placed on the wall. Watch this video on the Walk of Fame:

<http://www.islamicbulletin.org/videos/clay/star/ali.mp4>

THE FAREWELL SERMON OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

This Sermon was delivered on the Ninth Day of Dhul Hijjah 10 A.H in the Uranah Valley of Mount Arafat.

"O People, lend me an attentive ear, for I don't know whether, after this year, I shall ever be amongst you again. Therefore listen to what I am saying to you carefully and take these words to those who could not be present here today.

O People, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as Sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Allah has forbidden you to take usury (Interest), therefore all interest obligation shall henceforth be waived...

Beware of Satan, for your safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things.

O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have right over you. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to commit adultery.

O People, listen to me in earnest, worship Allah, say your five daily prayers (Salah), fast during the month of Ramadan, and give your wealth in Zakat. Perform Hajj if you can afford to. You know that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. You are all equal. Nobody has superiority over other except by piety and good action.

Remember, one day you will appear before Allah and answer for your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone.

O People, no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O People, and understand my words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Qur'an and my example, the Sunnah and if you follow these you will never go astray.

All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness oh Allah that I have conveyed your message to your people."

The farewell pilgrimage of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) may rightly be called the culminating point in his prophetic career. It was the sixty-third year of the Prophet's life which coincided with the close of the 10th of Hijra that he decided to perform Hajj, which in history goes by the name of Hajjah-tul-Wada.

The Prophet's mission had by this time been completed to all intents and purposes. To a people steeped in ignorance, he brought light and inspiration with the belief in Allah, the sole Creator, Master and Sustainer of the Universe. The completion of his mission implied his departure from his earthly home to his heavenly abode. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) had clearly visualized it. He therefore, decided to give the final touch to his massive work and imprint its salient points on the minds and hearts of his devoted followers so they might always keep before them the system of life-values encompassed by Islam.

THE PROPHET'S (S.A.W) LIFESTYLE

Talk **SOFTLY**
Walk **HUMBLY**
Eat **SENSIBLY**
Breathe **DEEPLY**
Sleep **SUFFICIENTLY**
Dress **PROPERLY**
Interact **POLITELY**
Act **FEARLESSLY**
Work **PATIENTLY**
Think **TRUTHFULLY**
Believe **CORRECTLY**
Behave **DECENTLY**
Learn **PRACTICALLY**
Plan **ORDERLY**
Earn **HONESTLY**
Spend **INTELLIGENTLY**
Sacrifice **REGULARLY**
Worship **DEDICATEDLY**
Serve parents **HAPPILY**
Respect neighbours **APPROPRIATELY**

Five days before Dhu al-Hijjah, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) dressed in pilgrim's garb and set out to Mecca with more than 114,000 Muslims. All of his wives accompanied him. As he rode, he recited, "Labbaik", signifying, "Here I am at Thy service, here I am, O Lord, here I am to declare that there is no partner with Thee. All praise and blessings belong to Thee and all sovereignty is Thine. I am here at Thy service, and Thou hast no partner, O Allah." As the Holy Prophet recited the above call, his companions repeated the same.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) reached Mecca on the 5th of Dhu-al-Hijjah. He made seven circuits of the Ka'ba, offered two rak'ats of prayer at the "station of Abraham" and climbing the Mount of Safa declared, **"There is no God but Allah, He has no partner, all sovereignty and praise belong to Him. He gives life and brings death. He is All-Powerful and Supreme over everything."**

On the 8th of Dhu-al-Hijjah, the Prophet (PBUH) left with his companions for Mina and passed the night there. On the 9th after the morning prayer, he proceeded to Arafat where he delivered the famous sermon which we have the honor to present in these pages.

The sermon of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is not only remarkable for its eloquence, but also for its sublime message for all of mankind.

Every word of it breathes magnanimity and aims at establishing righteousness and fair dealing among man on a workable basis. It establishes brotherhood among Muslims irrespective of the di-vergences, of their geographical, racial and color backgrounds. It provides an outline for a social order perfectly free from oppression and injustice.

“Son, You didn’t get cheated”

From Imprisonment on Death Row to a Respected Leader in his Community. By Imam Abu Kadr as told to the Editor

Q: What is your current occupation?

A: I am the Imam for the San Francisco Muslim Community Center (850 Divisadero, SF.) and also director of a Drug & Alcohol Rehabilitation Program which focuses on people from the criminal justice system with a history of drug and alcohol abuse. Previously I had worked as a counselor for quite some time in this same area.

Q: What was your very first contact with Islam and how did you come to accept Islam?

A: At about 15 years old, an elementary school friend whose family had become Muslim through the Nation of Islam teachings introduced me to some of the basic concepts. That was my very first contact with the teachings of Islam very basic, such as the name “Allah” and the name “Muslim”. We maintained contact and over a period of time they would introduce ideas about Islam. About a year later my older brother started attending meetings, bringing books and literature home. I began reading. It was Nation of Islam literature, but they were introducing the Qur’an as the “perfect book”, Allah as God, not a Trinitarian belief, and Mohammad as the Prophet (PBUH). There was some confusion in the message, but that was my 1st exposure.

Q: What brought you to the transition away from Nation of Islam?

A: As a member of NOI we were taught that there was someone coming after Elijah Muhammad who was going to teach us the religion. He saw his job not as teaching us the religion, but cleaning us up morally - bringing us away from indecent behavior, bad morals, laziness, drinking, smoking, generally becoming decent people. So we were ready for a change or transition. We had the Qur’an, but he taught that there was going to be a “new book a little book” coming. Our understanding of the Qur’an at that time was also corrupted by other information from his teachings. We weren’t able to understand the Qur’an clearly.

Q: Did you find the transition difficult?

A: It became more comfortable for me when Imam Warith deen Mohammad became the leader of NOI and introduced prayers and emphasized the Qur’an and the examples of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It was more what I was seeking. I found it more fulfilling, as there were less contradictions and a broader perspective on Islam. Then I found great benefit in being involved. It was more of what my soul was looking for.

Q: Do you feel that the difficulties in your life have made practicing Islam easier or more difficult?

A: Islam has made my life easier because now I have guidance in my life. Many Americans have difficulty in trying to find the purpose of their lives. I have a purpose; I have a responsibility to Allah, I’ve come to understand that my behavior needs to conform to what Allah requires of us in the Qur’an. That is the best way for me to realize the fullness of my human potential. Being obedient to Allah, gets easier as I grow. I am comfortable following the guidelines as they are set down for us in the Qur’an. I’m uncomfortable doing many things that are available in this society. Society is filled with temptations, and that is challenging. At this point in my life, it’s less of a struggle because I have had the benefit of the teachings of the Qur’an and have grown in that environment. I know through my life’s experiences the dangers of this society. I made a conscious choice to leave that lifestyle behind.

Q: Do you feel racism affects a persons understanding or practice of Islam?

A: Certainly it can. I believe there is racial influence worldwide. Color consciousness permeates the world community, both in and out of the US, but it is more subtle overseas. In the U.S. there is separation along racial lines, such as neighborhoods, etc. We also tend to socialize along ethnic lines in this society. From my personal observation in the Middle East I saw the value system that goes along with color classification also.

Q: How do you deal with the issue of race both in your job and in the community?

A: In my work I try my utmost to maintain professional ethics and performance of my tasks with excellence, integrity, and respect for what Allah requires of me. This gives me an advantage over someone who doesn’t have those guidelines. I try to follow what Allah has proscribed and strive for excellence regardless of stereotypical assumptions from others. A Muslim is one who endeavors to improve and perfect his behavior. I employ that in my work ethic. I’m willing to strive and improve. This has enabled me to be competitive in this society.

Q: Which Islamic principles do you feel are most important to African Americans overcoming the problems facing their communities?

A: All of the principles are valuable. The Five Pillars of Islam are essential to the African American community. I think it’s important for us to see the Qur’an with our own eyes and not allow someone else to see for us... we are not blind. If we are going to develop healthy community life in this country, it requires vision from the people who have grown in this environment. I have reached the conclusion that Islam is the “natural religion”. All of us have a natural capacity for this religion and it is innate. When we allow our own thinking and experiences to be seen in the light of the Qur’an, we benefit to a more significant degree than if we allow someone else to do that for us.

Q: If you had to describe the Five Pillars of Islam to someone who was raised in this society, how would you explain it in a simple way to help them understand the message?

A: The Prophet (pbuh) explained that Islam is structured on certain principles. The way you build your Islamic life is similar to the way you build a house. It requires effort and striving. First you start with the foundation, then the walls, roof, electricity. There are many elements that go into building a house. The same is true of your spiritual life. It must start with the foundation, which is the belief in the Oneness of Allah. What is built onto the foundation are the walls which metaphorically can be seen as the five daily prayers...keeping the whole together in conjunction with the foundation. Practicing the faith by fasting Ramadan, believing in the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and practicing Zakat or charity provides a fortress, not just a house, for our souls in this life and the next.

Q: What is the relationship between yourself, the Masjid and the Arab Muslim community?

A: Formalized relationships are cordial, but it’s not a significant meaningful relationship at this point. Usually the only interaction is for Eid, special occasions or crisis’s. If there is a problem we all come together. There are a few individuals that I have a special relationship with, but as an organized entity we all work individually within our own Masjids. I would like to see us working together with more concerted efforts.

Q: What do you see as the most significant challenge facing Muslim prisoners in the criminal justice system?

A: For Muslim prisoners the most difficult challenge is not while they are in the prison system, but after they get out. The question should be "What are they going to do with their Islamic life after they get out of the prison?" Generally speaking, they are not in prison because they are Muslim, but because their behavior was not Islamic. They are there because they were living wrong. While in prison Islam made sense to them and they became Muslim. They began to practice Islam. This gave them something to believe in. When they are returned to society the real challenge is, "So now you believe in Islam, how do you start to practice your beliefs?" Islam is not just saying you are Muslim, but in doing, Islam is both the words and the actions. Belief and practice. This is the challenge. Now you are out... fulfill your responsibility as a Muslim. It is not an easy thing to do. It is every Muslims individual responsibility to establish their Islamic life, to establish their commitment to Islamic values, Islamic practice and to being a part of Islamic community life. This is essential for the maintenance of Muslim character. Because we don't have Muslim community life per se, we don't eat together or study together as in many other places. This is difficult for many Muslims. Due to the absence of community life we often lack the support many new Muslims need in order to enhance and strengthen their Islamic. It requires commitment and belief. They have to strive to avoid the pitfalls that may be waiting for them in society. They may have to avoid previous relationships and people they associated with. All these things must be re-evaluated in the light of new Islamic views. For many this poses a great challenge. They feel there should be a great reception for them as a Muslim. That there should be assistance for them from the Islamic community. There should be homes and jobs. They feel that is what Islam should offer them. It is not the reality. In most instances, efforts must be self-motivated with the help of the belief in Islam. Perhaps, in the future, there will be that kind of community support, but at this time it is not the reality. As Muslims, we are instructed to help the needy among us, but there is not an organized Islamic community from which to gain that kind of support.

Q: How can the Muslim community reach out to Muslim prisoners to help them adjust to life outside?

A: Books, Qur'an's, literature. There is a huge demand for that. The demand currently is in greater proportion to what we are able to supply. Hundreds, even thousands of Qur'an's are requested.

Q: How is dawa (invitation to Islam) currently being practiced in the jails? What are the pitfalls we currently see?

A: Many people incarcerated have accepted Islam and realized the spiritual benefits. They feel a sense of responsibility to pass on what they have learned. They want to give something back. That's one of the motivations for many individuals, including myself. I came into Islam under those circumstances. It was a great blessing to have Islam as a source of relief and guidance. I was able to come out of that maze with my sanity, body, mind and health intact. I learned a lot from individuals that were there, some are still there. I feel a sense of indebtedness to them and also want to offer hope. It is possible for people to change and re-establish a life based on integrity. It comes from the blessing and favor of Allah. You have the freedom to study. You don't have to worry about paying for rent, electricity, water, heat, and groceries. You don't have the normal burdens of life that one encounters out here. In a way it's almost like a "boarding school" if you can see it from that perspective as a Muslim. You can use the time to study. That's one of the benefits I found from the nine years that I was incarcerated. I used the time to read. I was exposed to a great deal of good information about Islam. I began studying Arabic and reading the Qur'an in Arabic. It was difficult, but I had the desire. It became a time for preparation. In some ways it was easy because there was nowhere to go and nothing to do. There was no reason not to do five prayers a day. No one is telling you that you have appointments or meetings that are crucial can't be interrupted. The demands are different than on the outside.

Q: What kind of Islamic education is available to Muslims in prison?

A: In some of the prisons there are Muslim chaplains who come in as employees of the State of California. They are able to provide education, Islamic teachings, counseling, and guidance. They also

coordinate volunteers coming to the institution to provide other services to the Islamic community there. In most circumstances they are fortunate in that there are very knowledgeable people coming to instruct and support them. Many of them are helpful in overcoming and treating the mental and spiritual deficiencies in the individual that brought them to the point of incarceration.

Q: Do you think that the current cutbacks on affirmative action will have a negative effect on Muslims in prison or on ex-cons or the community at large?

A: Yes, it already has. Veterans in prison are prevented from using their veterans' benefits for higher education while in prison. Pell grants are now being denied to individuals in prison.

Q: Let's go back to the question of how your interest in Islam evolved. Were you raised Christian? Were you afraid of not being accepted by Muslims? Were you surprised to find the deep message in Islam?

A: My mom & dad had nine children of which I was the second. My early childhood was in Danville, IL. My mother was a professed Christian and she raised me with a great respect for God and with a strong sense of accountability to God. She taught us that one day God would judge us for how we had lived our lives. This greatly impressed me as she had a strong commitment to those ideals. My father was of a different opinion. He didn't believe in any organized religion that he had seen, which was predominantly Christian. He saw contradictions between "talk" and "action". He considered himself an atheist for many years, but he changed before he died. He began to see things differently in later years but he was opposed to what he saw as 'corrupt' religion. I'm not sure what my grandmothers' religion was, but I know she wanted to name me after one of the prophets, but my parents thought it was uncommon and rejected the idea. That had an influence on me later when I heard about Islamic names. My father had a sister with an Islamic name from birth. I don't know how she got that name and there was no way for me to find out where that influence came from because by then most of those family members had passed. There seems to have been some kind of Islamic influence in my life. As I said earlier, my older brother began going to the temples of Islam under the teaching of Elijah Muhammad and bringing home literature. Those things gave me hope that there was something out there for my spiritual development. I was not finding that in Christianity or other forms of ideologies such as communism or socialism. In the sixties, the militant experience was not satisfying or appealing to me. I was looking for an answer from God. After I got in trouble, I began going to Islamic meetings and started calling myself "Muslim" while still in high school at 16-17 years old. I started identifying myself as Muslim. The only information I really had was that Allah was God and that Jesus was not "God" and that the Bible was a book full of contradictions. I didn't know the Qur'an or how to pray, but I still identified myself as Muslim and I've never let go of that. As I became more knowledgeable I began to understand how Muslims were expected to behave. As I became more conscious of the actions involved with being a Muslim, I was no longer comfortable with just the label. I started to try to educate myself on how to be a Muslim in action, thought and deed.

Q: When you got in trouble was it while you were learning about Islam or before?

A: I got in trouble prior to learning about Islam. My first involvement with the criminal justice system was when I was in a group of friends on the way to school. One of the boys, unbeknownst to the rest of us, had a pellet gun. They put all 18 of us on probation. My family was naive about these things and in those days they thought it was something that would be good for us (probation) and keep us out of trouble. That was my first exposure to the criminal justice system. After that, at 15, I began to rebel against my father and his authority. I didn't respect his telling me what to do, where to go, or what time to come home. Pretty normal 15-year-old rebellion. This led being put out of the house while I was on probation and no longer under "parental control". I was sent to prison as a runaway and incorrigible. I still hadn't done anything to break the law. But that is how I first went to jail. I went to a county camp for nine months. This was in

California where we had moved in 1959. While I was in there I met some Muslims, Nation of Islam Muslims, of course. We started talking and they shared their understanding of what Islam was. The thing that really impressed me were the people who came from my neighborhood and had become Muslim. They were better people. They reformed. They became industrious, clean, concerned about other people in their lives, and their own health. This made a very strong impression on me.

Q: Did your family object to your studying Islam?

A: Not really. I started going to meetings when I was about 17. In my youthful enthusiasm I went home and started throwing away all the pork in the house. I didn't want them to be feeding pork to my younger brothers and sisters. My father thought I was crazy. His response was, "Are you crazy, boy? You don't buy the food in this house." It was a valid point. That was the original position of my family in the early stages of my conversion. My mother was opposed to some of the NOI ideas. As she began to understand Islam she would (and still does) give Zakat (charity). She tells me that whenever she doesn't give Zakat, it seems like "something always goes wrong with her money"! One day we were talking about my beliefs in Islam and she told me, "Son, you didn't get cheated". That said it all for me!

Q: How did your mother react to your acceptance of Islam?

A: Initially, because of the NOI, she had some reservations. My father did too. My father told me in 1970 when I really started to study and practice Islam while I was on Death Row, that I would be better off taking the direction that Malcom took. He said I would be better off following Malcom than Elijah. I told him that he didn't know what he was talking about. That was my understanding at the time. He evidently had insight because of his life experiences, which in my youth I couldn't appreciate then.

Q: What is your relationship with your family as a Muslim?

A: It's very good. I have good relations with my mother. We talk and write. She is back in Illinois now. When she is around me she prays with me, she follows and joins in Salah with me. That's a blessing. Recently I talked to her about accepting Allah and she didn't say no. I'm very hopeful for her. My older brother who introduced me to NOI just made his Shahadu several weeks ago. I also have one brother and his wife who accepted Islam several years ago and my youngest sister who also accepted Islam. This is very pleasing to me and I pray that Allah give them blessings.

Q: Were you concerned how your friends would react to your acceptance of Islam?

A: Not really. When I really began practicing Islam I was 20 years old and on Death Row. When I was about 17 I got involved with drugs and alcohol and ended up shooting a man and going to Death Row. That's where I really started to practice Islam. In 1972 the death penalty was declared unconstitutional in California and my death sentence was commuted to a life sentence. As I became stronger in my Islamic beliefs, I gained the reputation for being a good person based on my practice of Islam. As a matter of fact, the Associate Warden went to the parole board with me and told them I had done a 180-degree turn from who I was when I came into the institution. This was due to my practice of Islam. He encouraged them to give me an early release date. He told them I was helping others to improve their lives and become better individuals. They gave me a two-year parole date. I paroled December 4, 1978. I paroled the same date I went in, December 4, 1970.

Q: Do you wish that some things could have been different in your life? If you had to look back and make any changes in your life, what would you have wanted to do differently?

A: I would have liked to have benefited more from education. I found racism in education so because of that I wasn't interested in pursuing it. I wish I would have been more willing to go through academic institutions and complete them. As a Muslim, I am very interested in pursuing higher education and knowledge.

Q: Did you feel intimidated or frightened by any of the beliefs and practices of Islam?

A: Yes, some of it. When I first got into the NOI, we used to do a lot of physical and military types of training. This was while we were in prison. One day while doing exercises the person in charge was driving us to do push-ups on our knuckles and one of the others burst a knuckle on the rocky yard. I thought to myself, "What in the world have I gotten myself into?" It was like paramilitary training. Some of the people in charge were a little "drunk" on the militancy.

Q: How difficult was it to suddenly stop and give up many of the non-Islamic things you had been doing?

A: It was a challenge. Even down to speech. I went through withdrawals on cussing. I had to become conscious of my tongue, not using certain words or saying certain phrases. A lot of effort went into that. At that time since I was confined I didn't have the temptations of drugs or alcohol which I had used for a brief period as a teenager. That part wasn't a challenge for me while I was on Death Row. Once I returned to the main line population in the jail the opportunities or temptation to use those things were there. They were available in large quantities and was a prevailing problem. People were hooked on heroin in prison. Having the self-worth that Islam gave me made me appreciate that my person was sacred. I no longer wanted to be a participant in my own desecration through the influences of drugs and alcohol. It was available, but it wasn't a problem for me because by then I had been practicing Islam for two years and four months while on Death Row. I was praying and making Tahajed prayers (prayers done in the middle of the night). I believe to this day that it was due to the Tahajed prayers done with consistency while I was there that I was released.

Q: Did anyone notice a difference or change in you after you accepted Islam?

A: My father acknowledged changes. He commended Elijah Muhammad once for getting me to do things that he had been trying to get me to do for years which I had rebelled against and resisted. The administration in prison acknowledged the changes. People I had associated with in the so-called "free" society saw the changes. My friends, the people that really knew me, told me to never leave Islam. They said they didn't want to see me go back and be the person I was before Islam. They were happy for me. They really encouraged me to stick with Islam and to be sincere.

Q: Raised as a Christian, did you find it difficult to give up the belief of the Trinity when you accepted Islam?

A: No. I feel that it was a blessing that my mother was the one who introduced me to the Christian religion and the Bible. I didn't receive my early Christian teaching from preachers or people who had gone to theological seminaries. I got some very basic concepts about God and how He was All-knowing and took account of everything and was kind. She believed in Jesus, but she didn't give me a heavy dose of Trinity. At about 12, I became aware of some inconsistencies and unanswered questions in the Christian teachings. I was being told things that just didn't make any sense. I began to recognize some of the misinformation we were being given and I began to question. This is when I first began to have doubts about this doctrine. As a teenager, I began to hear some of the NOI arguments against Trinity, such as how could you get 3 in 1? It is a contradiction and they would teach against it. I was influenced by some of those teachings, but the strongest influence was the bad treatment of the Christian establishment towards African Americans. Something inside me wouldn't allow me to accept a doctrine that had treated people so badly. Those things made me cautious and I never was able to accept or open up wholeheartedly to their beliefs. Although I believed in God wholeheartedly, there were certain aspects of Christianity that I couldn't open myself to.

Q: How do you address the subject of Trinity when you have dialog with a Christian concerning the Islamic belief of the Oneness of Allah which is the backbone of Islamic belief?

A: I approach it by keeping it within the realm of what they know. What they accept. One thing I mention is that Jesus prayed. It shows that Jesus could not be God, because God has no need to pray. If Jesus said "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?" it seems to me proof that he wasn't God. In the Bible it says that Jesus asked, "Who do thou say I am?" And the response is "Good Master". He said, "No, there is none that is a good master, but One, and it's He that is in heaven." So he denied being a "good master". If he didn't accept being called "good master" how would he have accepted being called God? 'Good master' is a whole lot less than being called God. There are people who master certain things. We call teachers "master". They master subjects or they master a trade, or they master a craft. Additionally, in the Bible, David is also referred to as the only begotten son. How can there be two "only begotten sons"?

Q: Is there a difference in Christian doctrine between the Creator and the son? Sometimes they say he is the same and sometimes they say it's not him, there is three in one and one in three.

A: In Christian doctrine it says there are three concepts that you can not question, you just have to accept on faith. These three things don't make rational sense. One is the Trinitarian doctrine, the second is the idea of original sin, and the third is the divinity of Jesus. As far as the idea of original sin, one has to accept that Jesus was born of human parents, therefore, because of ancestry he would have to have been touched with original sin. It just doesn't make sense. There are too many contradictions. Many Christians can't have a rational discussion about these things. They get very emotional unless Allah has blessed their hearts. In most cases of Christians having converted to Islam, the individuals' own questioning Christian doctrine has led them to the logic of the Qur'an and Islam.

Q: How do address the question of the divinity of Jesus and how Christians say you will not be saved unless you are a Christian? How do you respond to that within the context of your Islamic beliefs?

A: I refer to what Imam Mohammed from La Grange, Georgia said to a Christian woman who approached him and told him that he would not be saved unless he accepted Jesus as his lord and savior. He said, "Mam, I respect your desire to see me with salvation, but if we can talk for a minute I would like to get your opinion. What do you think about Abraham?" To which she responded, "He was the best man, etc." He then asked her, "Do you believe he had salvation?" She answered, "Of course he had salvation." "What about Noah?" She responded, "Of course he had salvation." He then pointed out that they were living before Jesus. They didn't know about Jesus. He could have gone on to mention Moses, etc., but he merely let his point be taken. I don't argue with anyone. I merely point out the inconsistencies in their beliefs. Sometimes just our presence is a form of dawa (invitation to Islam). Make them think and consider their positions.

Q: What impressed you most when you first read the Holy Qur'an?

A: The Holy Qur'an impacted me on many levels. Primarily it satisfied a need in my soul and my intellect. Intellectually it provided essential guidance and logic. I find it gives the seeker information of the highest caliber. Allah will grant us knowledge as we seek it. It is a great equalizer and allows a person to lift himself or herself to the highest degree. It offers the possibility for personal growth as long as we live. It is like a seed that once nourished can become the most beautiful of Allah's gifts. It allows us as humans to realize our highest destiny. It offers dignity, self-respect, and self-realization. It is all there for the taking. As an African American man, I felt with other doctrines I was forced to compromise too much of my personal dignity. With the Qur'an I found that I could learn things from Allah's word that gave me an advantage to master myself, self-regulate myself. It gave me information and insights into life that enabled me to make progress and become a better person. The relevance of the information to my own personal circumstances was invaluable. I didn't feel obligated to anyone for this information. It was just all there in the Qur'an...free for the taking. All it required was the courage to turn the pages. That was really impressive to me. When I started using the teachings of the Qur'an in conducting my life I could see the respect from others. That was something that had been

denied me. It restored something in me and no one could challenge that. They couldn't find any fault in what I said to them from the Book. It couldn't be disproved. That meant a great deal to me.

Q: Do you think Islam can influence modern civilization in any way?

A: Certainly, I feel Muslims can influence this society on many levels. Currently there is much work going on to address issues in the academic community, business, trade, banking, political environments, and peace processes. We would like to bring about changes in the oppressed communities of the world and aid the needy among us on a global level. By following the commands of Allah in the Holy Qur'an there would be justice, charity and a sense of brotherhood among all the peoples of the world. We would like to provide more of an outreach program and offer help to those in need in our own community as we are commanded to do as Muslims.

Q: What advice would you give to Muslim youth in this society that you see as most threatening to them and their Islamic beliefs?

A: Not to diminish their Islamic life, but to continue to practice it and to be confident in what it can deliver to them. Do not be ashamed of it and do not follow, but take the lead. Muslims are not to follow non-Muslims. Take the lead in establishing and following examples of the successful behavior of some of the young Muslims in history. I'm referencing some of the great historical figures that made significant contributions to Islamic development. I encourage them to be more than Muslim in name, and not to assimilate into the popular culture.

Q: What message would you like to relay to Muslims and non-Muslims?

A: For Muslims and non-Muslims alike, I would like to say that in our book, the Holy Qur'an, are mentioned "the peoples of the book" with respect. We live in a country with people of the book, in that we share the same religious history, and we identify with the same prophets as the prophets of the Jews and Christians. We are taught to respect the people of the book and there is enough room for them to respect us. We would like to see them respect and accept the prophet that was sent as a universal prophet for all mankind. This was the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). We are not at variance with anyone; we are just trying to be obedient to Allah.

Q: Do you ever feel that the path you have taken to finally reach Islam was all part of a plan?

A: Certainly. A couple of Hadith come to mind on that subject. The hadith that talks about people that behave a certain way until that which is written overcomes them. Then they enter paradise or hell depending upon which they choose. Some people will behave as though they are righteous until that which is written for them overcomes them. Then they behave as people of hell and thus they enter it. Some people behave as though they are destined for hell until that which is written for them overcomes them and then they behave as the people of paradise and thus they enter it. That is one Hadith that helps me understand my circumstances. I believe in Allah's plan for my life. I believe that Allah's justice will prevail. I believe that the large number of African Americans entering Islam today is a part of Allah's mercy and justice. The injustice of our ancestors having their Islamic way of life forcibly taken away from them and forced to become Christians. The great majority of our ancestors who were enslaved came from Muslim lands. So perhaps it is Allah's mercy to the descendants of those Muslim slaves that is returning them to their rightful heritage.

Editor's Note: It was a pleasure interviewing Imam Abu Kadr Al-Amin. Iman AbuKadr has a beautiful way of giving the Friday talk. When I attend Jumma prayers, I, like hundreds of others, are touched by his powerful message. One can tell it comes from the heart and that Allah has given him Hikma (wisdom). May Allah continue to shower His blessings on Imam Abu and his family.

"He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; And he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing." (Quran 2:269)

The wisdom of Luqman

Luqman [the wise] (alaihissalam) is a well-known sage, whose advice to his son has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Luqman's sayings and the words of advice he gave to his son, contain rare wisdom, and quite a number of Traditions refer to "Luqman's advice to his son".

One of these are: "O my dear son, sit in the company of the Ulema (religious scholars) frequently and listen carefully to what the wise men say, for Allah gives life to the dead hearts by the 'Nur (light)' of wisdom, just as He revives the dead earth by heavy life-giving rains."

They relate that once a stranger passed by Luqman (alaihissalam) while he was sitting among his followers. The man said, addressing Luqman, "Aren't you the bondsman of such and such tribe."

He replied, "Yes, I was."

The stranger asked again, "Aren't you the one who used to graze the goats near such and such hill?"

Luqman replied, "Yes, I am the same person."

The man then said, "Then what has brought you to this noble position?"

Luqman (alaihissalam) replied, "I was very particular about a few things and I observed them on all occasions, viz. Fear of Allah, truthfulness in speech, fulfilling a trust and avoiding useless talk."

Luqman advised his son, "My son entertain good expectations from Allah without losing fear of His punishment. A fear of His punishment should make you despair of His Mercy."

His son replied, "The heart is one. How can it contain hope and fear at one and the same time?"

Luqman (alaihissalam) responded, "A believer is such as if he possessed two hearts: one teeming with hope and the other equally full of fear."

He exhorts his son to recite "Rebi Aghfirlee" (O my Lord, forgive my sins) frequently. For, there are certain hours during which Allah's special favors descend upon His men and everybody is granted whatever he asks from Allah.

He says: "My dear son no one can perform good deeds unless he possesses a firm belief in Allah. If a person's heart is unsound, he is very weak in performing good actions."

"My dear son, if Satan (the Devil) were to create doubts in your mind, let your firm belief overpower him and silence his whispers; and if he tempts you to be negligent in virtues, defeat him



with remembrance of the grave and the Day of Resurrection; if he (the Devil) tempts you towards the joys of this world or makes you afraid of the hardships of this life, say to him, 'One must inevitably leave this world (neither the luxuries nor the hardships of this life are enduring).''

He says: "My dear son, he who tells a lie loses the freshness of face, he who cultivates bad habits will ever remain sad; it is far easier to move huge mountains from one place to another than to reform the ignorant stupid."

He says: "My dear son, abstain from telling lies; for lies soon arouse enmity and hatred for the liar."

"My dear son, be very particular about attending funeral prayers and avoid attending festivities. For, funerals remind one of the Hereafter and festivities divert One's attention towards this world."

"My dear son, do not eat anything, when your stomach is full; it is better to put food before a dog than to overeat."

"My dear son, don't be so sweet that people swallow you up, nor so bitter that they spit you out."

"My dear son, do not be less capable (in devotions) than a rooster which starts crowing at early dawn and you be laying asleep in bed."

"My dear son, don't delay Taubah (Repentance), for death may take you unaware."

"My dear son, do not make friends with stupid people, lest you should develop a liking for their foolish talk. And do not incur the enmity of a wise man, lest he should turn away from you in disgust (and you should be deprived of getting the benefit of his wisdom)."

"My dear son, let no one but the pious partake of your food and always consult Ulama (religious scholars) in your affairs."

Someone asked Luqman (alaihissalam), "Who is the worst of men?" He replied, "The one who does not mind being watched while doing an evil deed."

He says: "My dear son, associate frequently with the pious for, in this way alone, you can attain to the virtues that they possess. Besides, when Allah's special favors descend upon these beings you will also be able to receive your share of blessings; for when it rains; showers fall on all sides of the house."

"My dear son, avoid the company of the wicked people, for no good can be expected to come out of associating with them. Moreover, if at any time, Allah's punishment befalls them, you will also be affected by it."

He says: "A father's punishment is as beneficial for a child as is the water for the fields."

He says: "My dear son, since the day you were born, everyday, you are getting closer to the Hereafter with your back towards this world. So, your abode in the Hereafter is far nearer to you (because you are advancing towards it everyday, at all times) than your house in this world (because you are moving farther and farther away from it day by day)."

He says, "My dear son, avoid incurring debts; for a debt is a humiliation by day and a grief by night. (One is disgraced when the creditors make demands by day, and one spends the night in grief, worrying about his debts.)"

"My dear son, entertain hopes of mercy from Allah, but let not your hopes make you bold in committing sins; be fearful of Allah but let not your fear make you despair of His mercy."

"My dear son, if someone comes to you with the complaint that so and so has taken both his eyes and you actually see both his eyes missing, do not form any judgement about the person until you have heard the other side. For, this man might have hit the other person first and taken out four eyes earlier."

When the last hour came for Luqman, he said to his son, "My dear son, I have given you a lot of advice during my lifetime; now that I am leaving the world, I would like to advise you about six points:

(1) Busy yourself in the affairs of this world to the extent of the remaining period of your life (which is nothing when measured against the eternity of the Akhirah (the Hereafter).

(2) Worship Allah according to the measure of your dependency on Him (and, obviously, one needs His help in everything).

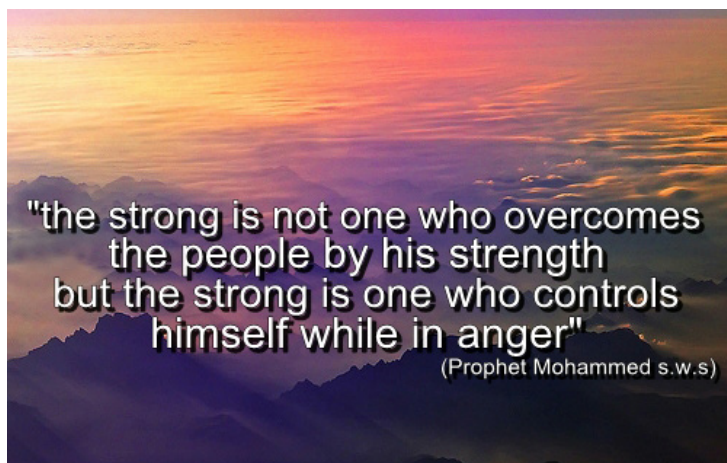
(3) Make preparations for the Hereafter according to the extent of your stay in that world (and, obviously, one shall have to stay there eternally, for there is no other place to go to after death).

(4) Continue to struggle for redemption from Hell-fire till you are sure you have attained it. (It is common knowledge that, if someone is under trial for a grievous offence, he continues to make efforts for his acquittal till he is sure that the case is going to be decided in his favor.)

(5) If you have the audacity to indulge in sins, do so to the extent that you can endure Hell-fire (for, punishment of sins is dictated by law and you are never sure whether the Sovereign, however infinite His mercy may be, will grant you mercy petition.)

(6) When you want to commit a sin, look for a hiding place that is not being watched by Allah and His angels (for, everybody knows the consequences of engaging in a revolt before the eyes of the Sovereign Himself or in the presence of his secret agents.)

HADITH ON ANGER



"Give me some advice", someone asked. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said, "Be not angry."

No person has drunk a better draught than he who has swallowed anger for God's sake.

Verily the most beloved of you to me and nearest to me in the next world are those of good disposition; and verily the greatest enemies to me and the furthest from me are the ill-tempered.

Verily, anger corrupts faith like as the juice of bitter plants corrupt honey.

Whoso suppresses his rage, while he has the power to show himself, God will call on him on the day of resurrection before all creation, and reward him exceedingly.

"Who do you imagine to be strong or powerful?" asked the Prophet (PBUH). "He who throws people down," replied his disciples. "Nay!" said the Prophet, "It is he who masters himself when angry."

Verily, anger is a live coal in the heart of the son of Man; do ye not see the redness of his eyes, and the swelling of his two jugular veins? ...Whoso then feels anything of that, let him stick to the earth.

When one of you is angry while standing, let him sit down; and if his anger goes off from him, (then well and good), otherwise let him lie down.

My Lord has bidden me do nine things: the fear of God in secret and in public; a just word amidst anger and pleasure, and a middle way in poverty and affluence; and that I perform my relative duties to him who cuts off all ties with me, and give to him who denies me, and forgive him who wrongs me, and that my silence be for reflection, and my speaking be for remembrance (of God), and my eye (sight) be to take example, and that I bid justice.

Abu Bakr relates that he heard the Holy Prophet (PBUH) say: "Let no judge decide a case between two parties while he is in a rage."

Verily, Anger is from Satan.



BEYOND IMAGINATION

So much mystery surrounds these beings, and once again speculation and imagination have taken hold in American popular culture. Movies, TV dramas and documentaries, and other images have come out sparking new interest in a subject which goes back as far as human history. But do angels actually exist? And if so, what are they really like?

Every Muslim must believe in angels as we know from the Qur'an.

"It is not devotion to turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather, true devotion is believing in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the prophets. (Quran 2:177)

In addition: **"Anyone who rejects Allah and His angels and His Messengers and the Last Day has gone very far astray."** (Quran 4:136)

We also have the well-known hadith in which the Prophet (PBUH) answers a question about the meaning of faith, **"It is that you believe in Allah, His Angels, His books, His Messengers and the Last Day, and that you believe in the Decree, both the good and the bad of it."** (Sahih Muslim)

So we have strong indications of the importance of believing in angels. But should we accept popular notions about angels? Angels have often been pictured in European art as young boys wearing little or no clothing, and in popular fiction as souls of the dead who have gone to heaven...those who have 'earned their wings' and now sit on clouds playing harps. Perhaps the most common image is that of a beautiful female angel, one who comforts us in times of distress. However, as Muslims, we must beware of such creative versions, as they are based on speculation. As we know from the Qur'an, **"Those who believe not in the Hereafter name the angels with female names, but they have no knowledge therein. They follow nothing but conjecture, and conjecture avails nothing against Truth."** (Quran 53:27-28)

Angels are creations of Allah, separate from human beings. According to Ibn Hajar, Sa'id bin al-Musayyab, "The angels are neither male nor female. They neither eat nor drink. They do not marry nor have children."

The Prophet (PBUH) in sound hadith said, **"The angels were created from light, the jinn were created from fire. Man was created from what has been described to you."** (Muslim)

Unlike humans, angels do not have free will and are not able to disobey Allah. Rather, they always faithfully carry out His commands. Perhaps this is why a good person is often referred to as 'an angel'. These qualities of angels separate them from the jinn, who, like humans, have free will and can be Muslim or non-Muslim. The differences between these three creations of Allah can be seen clearly in the story of the creation of Adam:

Iblis (Satan) was in the presence of the angels when he refused to bow down to Adam,

"He said, 'I am better than he, Thou didst create me from fire, and him from clay.'" (Quran 7:12)

Unlike Iblis, the jinn and all of the angels bowed down.

Angels are said to be immensely beautiful creations, they can also be incredibly huge, especially compared to objects we know on earth, and only Allah knows their number. We do know that the number of angels is great.

After the Night Journey, the Prophet (PBUH) recounted, **"Then I was taken up to the Frequented House and every day 70,000 angels visit it, never returning to it again, another [group] coming after them."** (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

It is also related in hadith that the number of angels carrying Hell-fire on the Day of Resurrection will number 4,900,000,000... and this is only one of the countless number of tasks the angels have been given.

Now, one might ask, if Allah is self-sufficient, why angels are necessary at all? It is not a matter of need, as the angels carry out their tasks only by Allah's leave. Equally, Allah does not question His creations on the Day of Judgment for the purpose of obtaining information. Allah has no partners in His power. The angels were created to worship Allah and glorify Him, and to fulfill the purposes of Allah according to His wisdom ...just as Allah created mankind and jinn to worship Him. With this in mind, we turn to the different types of angels.

There are angels in charge of revelation, natural places and events, human events and deeds, pure worship of Allah, and anything else Allah wills. The angels Jibril, Mika'il, and Israfil are the leaders of the angels, and mentioned by name in authentic sources.

Jibril (Gabriel) is the angel of revelation, the angel sent with the Books to all the Messengers. Passages in the Qur'an referring to the Faithful Spirit, and the Holy Spirit are said to refer to the Angel Jibril. He also appears in a number of hadiths in the form of a man, suddenly appearing out of the desert to question the Prophet (PBUH) about matters of religion. It was Jibril who came to the Prophet (PBUH) in the cave of Hira with the first revelation of the Quran, and reviewed the Quran in its entirety with the Prophet (PBUH) each Ramadan to insure its accuracy.

The angel Mika'il (Michael) is named once in the Qur'an:

"Say: Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and prophets, to Jibril and Mika'il ... Allah is an enemy to those who reject faith." (Quran 2:98)

According to commentary, this refers to some disbelievers during the time of the Prophet (PBUH) who ridiculed Muslim belief. According to hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) asked Jibril, "What is Mika'il in charge of?" He replied, **"The plants and the rain."** (At-Tabarani)

Mika'il has assistants who follow his orders and make the clouds and winds move according to Allah's will. In another hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) asked Jibril, "Why do I never see Mika'il laugh?" He replied, **"Mika'il has not laughed since the Fire was created."** (Ahmad)

Israfil is the angel given the Trumpet. He is ready to blow the three blasts ushering in the Day of Judgement upon Allah's command. It is reported the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

"How can I enjoy myself when the one with the Trumpet has raised the Trumpet to his mouth, knitted his brow and is waiting to blow?" They said, "What should we say, Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Say: Allah is enough for us, and the best Guardian. We have put our trust in Allah." (At-Tirmidhi)

The du'a (supplication) of the Prophet (PBUH) concerning these three angels is, "O Allah, Lord of Jibril, Mika'il, and Israfil, Bringer of the heavens and the earth into being, Knower of the unseen and visible, it is You who judges between Your slaves concerning the things about which they disagree. Guide us to the truth in respect of the things about which there is disagreement by Your permission. You guide whomever You will to a straight path."

Other angels mentioned in the Qur'an are Guardian angels, appointed to protect each human being. They avert all danger, except what Allah has decreed, and the Recording angels, two for each person. The one on the right hand writes down the good actions, and the one on the left writes the evil actions:

"Yet there are over you noble watchers, writers that know whatever you do." (Quran 82:10-12)

Main Angels

♥ Jibreel - in charge of communicating Allah's words to His prophets

♥ Israfeel - in charge of blowing the trumpet to mark the Day of Judgment

♥ Mikail - in charge of rainfall and sustenance

♥ Munkar and Nakeer - after death, these angels will question souls in the grave about their faith and deeds

♥ Malak Am-Maut (Angel of Death) - in charge of taking possession of souls after death

♥ Malik - guardian of hell

♥ Ridwan - guardian of heaven

On the Day of Judgment, each person is given his book, a complete account of all his deeds in life. The Angel of Death, who takes the soul of the dying:

"Say: The Angel of Death will take you back, who has been given charge of you. Then you will be returned unto your Lord." (Quran 32:11)

Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, says of the believers,

"Those the angels take in a good and wholesome state. They say, 'Peace be upon you! Enter the Garden on account of the things you used to do.'" (Quran 16:32)

From hadith it is said that the helpers of this particular angel may be the most beautiful beings, or appear the most frightful, depending on a person's deeds during his lifetime.

There are Angels who visit those placed in the graves. The Prophet (PBUH) said,

"When someone is placed in his grave, and his companions turn and go, and he can still hear the tread of their sandals, two angels come to him and make him sit up and say to him, 'What do you say about this man Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace?' He will say, 'I testify that he is the slave of Allah and His Messenger.' It will be said, 'Look at your place in the Fire. Allah has given you, in exchange for it, a place in the Garden.'" The Prophet (PBUH) said, "He will see both places." And further, "The unbeliever or the hypocrite will say, 'I do not know. I used to say what everyone else said. He will be told, 'You neither understood nor followed the guidance. Then he will be hit between the ears with an iron hammer and will cry out with a cry which is heard by everything near him except men and jinn.'" (Al-Bukhari)

We know from Qur'an also of the Custodians of the Garden:

"And those who were fearful of their Lord will be driven to the Garden in companies and then, when they arrive there finding its gates open, its custodians will say to them, 'Peace be upon you! You have done well, so enter timelessly forever.'" (Quran 39:73)

And likewise the Custodians of the Fire, as described in the Qur'an,

"O you who believe, safeguard yourselves and your families against a Fire whose fuel is men and stones, and over which are harsh, terrible angels who do not disobey Allah in anything He commands

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and do what they are commanded." (Quran 66:6)

There will be Angels to issue glad tidings to the believers at their time of death and upon their resurrection.

"Those who say 'Our Lord is Allah', and then go straight, the angels descend on them, Feel no fear and do not grieve, but rejoice in the Garden which you were promised. We are your protectors in the life of this world and in the Next World. You will have there all you could wish for. You will have there all that you demand. Hospitality from One who is Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Quran 41:30-32)

There are Angels entrusted with developments in the womb. One hadith tells us, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, whose truthfulness is confirmed, said "The way that each of you is created is that you are gathered in you mother's womb for forty days as a sperm-drop and then for a similar length of time as a lump of flesh. Then an angel is sent and he breathes the spirit into you and is charged with four commands: to write down your provision, your life-span, you actions, and whether you will be wretched or happy." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

According to another, the Prophet (PBUH) said, **"Allah has put an angel in charge of the womb. He says, 'O Lord, a drop? O Lord, a clot? O Lord, a morsel?'" When Allah desires to complete the creation of the fetus, he says, "O Lord, male or female? Wretched or happy? How much provision? How long a lifespan?" And he writes that for him in his mother's womb." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)**

From this second hadith it is clear that the angels do not act independently in these matters, but ask Allah concerning His decree in order to fulfill their tasks; for Allah, Glorified and Exalted, knows of all events before they come to pass.

There are also the Bearers of the Throne and the Kárubiyyun.

"Upon that day eight shall bear above them the Throne of your Lord." (Quran 69:17)

According to Ibn 'Abbas, the Companion of the Prophet (PBUH) who was foremost among interpreters of the Qur'an, the eight refers to eight rows of angels. The Kárubiyyun are the chiefs of the Bearers of the Throne. The term Kárubiyyun is said to come from a root connoting worry or distress, due to their great awe and fear of Allah. Also, the singular, Akarúb is analogous to the English Acherub or archangel.

When the Prophet (PBUH) was ridiculed and stoned by the people of the city of Ta'if, Jibril came to him with the Angel of the Mountains and offered to crush the people of Ta'if between the mountains. The Prophet (PBUH) declined, preferring to be patient in hopes their offspring would accept Islam.

Another magnificent Hadith relates, "Allah's apostle said, (A group of) angels stay with you at night and (another group of) angels by daytime, and both groups gather at the time of Asr and Fajr prayers. Then those angels who have stayed with you overnight ascend (to Heaven) and Allah asks them (about you) ...and he knows everything about you. 'In what state did you leave My slaves?' The angels reply, 'When we left them, they were praying, and when we reached them they were praying'".

The Angels of the Ranks are in constant worship, never moving from a standing, bowing, or prostrating position. There are yet others of whom we do not know,

"None knows the hosts of your Lord except Him. It is nothing but a reminder to all human beings." (Quran 74:31)

The angels who travel in search of those who gather together for the remembrance of Allah are called the Angels of Dhikr. On encountering such a gathering, these angels report to Allah, and Allah grants forgiveness to those remembering their Lord.

Thus, we are "touched" by angels every moment of our lives and by our every action, thought, word, and deed. Though we may not see an angel (or we may not recognize one that is), as Muslims we know that we are continually watched over and blessed by their presence. Why would we ascribe earthly attributes to the angels of Allah, when Allah has created this most wondrous gift? Indeed, we have only to open the pages of The Glorious Qur'an to find out all we desire about Angels. It is truly "beyond our imaginations".

SPLIT-PEA SOUP, ANYONE?

Several years ago, some university students were driving from San Francisco to Los Angeles. Midway through their journey they began seeing road signs for Andersen's Split-Pea Soup restaurant. They were tired and the idea of getting a steaming cup of pea soup seemed exciting. Being Muslims they also knew something about Halal (allowed) and Haram (forbidden). It was a very simple scheme. Lard, ham, and bacon were to be avoided. Beyond that there was no need to complicate life by investigating further and becoming nit-picky.

While enjoying the tasty soup, which came with a rich creamy texture and a nice aroma, they did see some red things in it. Must be vegetable, they assured themselves. Besides, what could be wrong with a split-pea soup? It was only when they came back that they learned, to their horror, that the red pieces were actually ham. "Everybody knows that split-pea soup contains ham", their informant told them. Everybody, but them. Their simple scheme of determining Halal and Haram had just failed miserably and left behind a terrible feeling.

It is difficult to say how many Muslims in this country have become, and continue to be, victims of their own simple approaches in matters of Halal. Today in Muslim households across the country one can find products containing gelatin, enzymes, sweet whey, and a number of other ingredients each of which could come from the same source that these Muslims would avoid if listed directly. This casual approach affects us not just individually but also collectively. Muslims bring food to Masjids, Islamic schools and other Muslim gatherings which have not been carefully scrutinized for its contents. In such gatherings others find it awkward to inquire about the ingredients, and therefore those who bring such food bear a much greater responsibility for ensuring its Halal status.

In Islamic schools and other settings where Muslim youth are involved, this care is necessary for an additional reason. Our next generation must be educated and trained so that it will not only be able to know Halal from Haram, but will also approach the issue with confidence and determination. This can only happen if we collectively show concern for this issue. None of us would touch a food package with a ten foot pole if we suspected it had a trace of cyanide. Logical reasoning suggests that those who know that Haram means "forbidden by Allah, the Supreme Authority", take the same precautions against a food item that contains Haram ingredients.

"They ask what is Halal to them (as food). Say, Halal unto you are **all things good and pure.**" (Qur'an 3:4)

Halal is a chorionic term which means 'permitted' or 'lawful'. In reference to food, Halal is the Islamic dietary standard as prescribed in the Noble Qur'an. The Qur'an states that all foods are Halal except those which are specifically stated to be otherwise. That list is not very long. The following verses from the Qur'an describe most of the prohibited food items.

"Forbidden to you for food are: carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which had been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored to death, or that which had been partly eaten by a wild animal; unless you are able to slaughter it (in due form); which is sacrificed on stone (altars).." (Quran 5:3)

"O ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling (dedication of) stones, and (divination by) arrows, are an abomination, of Satan's handiwork: Eschew such abomination, that you may prosper." (Quran 5:90)

"Eat not of meats on which Allah's name has not been pronounced: That would be impiety..." (Quran 6:121)

From these verses and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Islamic scholars have established that all foods are Halal unless they fall into one of the following categories:

1. Carrion or dead animals
2. Flowing or congealed blood
3. Swine
4. Any animal which has been slaughtered in a name other than that of Allah.
5. Any animal which has been slaughtered without the name of Allah pronounced upon it during slaughtering.
6. Animals killed in a manner which prevents the blood from fully draining from the body.

7. Intoxicants of all types including alcohol and drugs.

There are more than 8,000 grocery items lining the shelves of North American supermarkets today. They represent more than 3,000 food ingredients. How can we determine whether a given item is Halal? Fortunately, in the commonly used items only a handful of ingredients have to be guarded. This issue will list some of these.

READ THE LABELS

The law requires that food manufacturers provide ingredient information on the food labels. That makes our job easier. All we need is to read the labels carefully. To be sure, ingredient labels are not the most readable part of many food packages, and they may not always contain sufficient information to determine the Halal status of a product. But reading food ingredient labels is the first essential step in that direction. As you read the labels, especially look for the following ingredients. They deserve a hard look:

DAIRY GROUP

Whipping Cream.....Mono- and di-glycerides
Cheeses.....Enzymes, whey, gelatin
Yogurt.....Gelatin, whey
Margarine.....Animal fat, mono- and di-glycerides
Ice Cream.....Liquor flavor, gelatin, animal fat, mono- and di-glycerides, vanilla extract, marshmallows.

BAKERY AND CEREAL PRODUCTS

Look for these in all bakery and cereal products: Gelatin, mono- and di-glycerides, animal shortening, whey. In cereals look for marshmallows. (They contain gelatin.)

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Additives and preservatives may be added in the preparation of processed and canned fruits and vegetables. Look for: Gelatin, mono- and di-glyceride, cheeses, alcohol, or wine.

CANDIES

Look for: Animal fat, gelatin, alcohol, whey, glycerol, glycerine, and marshmallows.

MEET THE SUSPECTS

Now that we have learned how to spot the suspect ingredients on a food label, here is more information that will help us decide whether these ingredients can be considered Halal or non-Halal. Lard is a saturated fat obtained from swine (pigs), particularly from the abdominal cavity of the animal. Any food containing lard is completely Haram. Mono- and di-glycerides are lipid (fat) molecules used as emulsifiers in shortening, bakery, and dairy products. These may be manufactured from vegetable oils, beef fat, lard, or marine oils. Therefore, Muslims should stick to labels saying vegetable or marine mono- and di-glycerides.

Shortening is a blend of fat and/or oil. If the label simply says 'shortening', stay away from it; it may even be lard. When the label says 'vegetable shortening' without listing all the vegetable sources or adding, the words "pure" or "100%". Even 1% lard will make it 100% haram.

Enzymes are a protein substance found and formed in all living cells that bring about chemical reactions inside or outside of the body. Enzymes can be extracted from animal sources, calves and pigs. Vegetable enzymes are okay.

Chocolate liquor is simply chocolate syrup. It is not an alcoholic product, so it is OK to consume. Liquor flavor is derived from brandy, whiskey, or other wines. Haram.

Glycerine - The chemical name for glycerine is glycerol which is a colorless syrupy liquid made from fats and oils. Both animal and vegetable fats may be used. Glycerine made from vegetable oils is Halal.

WHEN IN DOUBT

Remember, you can always look for the symbols K or U which is Halal (but not on alcoholic items). Absolutely no pork and if unsure choose vegetable ingredients.

WHY BOTHER?

In a way, the life of a Muslim revolves around the concept of Halal. He or she must earn income from Halal sources, be involved only in Halal transactions, and eat Halal food. In every walk of life, staying away from Haram is a lifelong struggle. It is obvious that Muslims should seek an education and training for their children that will well prepare them for this. Education of Muslim children can not be complete if it fails to inculcate in them a strong faith in the superiority of Halal practices.



RUMAYSA BINT MILHAN

Even before Islam was introduced to Yathrib, Rumaysa was known for her excellent character, the power of her intellect and her independent attitude of mind. She was known by various names including Rumaysa and Ghumaysa, but these were possibly nicknames. One historian says that her real name was Sahlah but later she was popularly known as Umm Sulaym.

Umm Sulaym was first married to Malik ibn an-Nadr and her son by this marriage was the famous Anas ibn Malik, one of the great companions of the Prophet.

Umm Sulaym was one of the first women of Yathrib to accept Islam. She was influenced by the refined, dedicated, and persuasive Musab ibn Umayr who was sent out as the first missionary or ambassador of Islam by the noble Prophet. This was after the first pledge of Aqabah.

Twelve men of Yathrib had gone to Aqabah on the outskirts of Makkah to pledge loyalty to the Prophet. This was the first major break through for the mission of the Prophet for many years.

Umm Sulaym's decision to accept Islam was made without the knowledge or consent of her husband, Malik ibn an-Nadr. He was absent from Yathrib at the time and when he returned he felt some change had come over his household and asked his wife: "Have you been rejuvenated?" "No," she said, "but I (now) believe in this man (meaning the Prophet Muhammad [SAW])."

Malik was not pleased especially when his wife went on to announce her acceptance of Islam in public and instruct her son Anas in the teachings and practice of the new faith. She taught him to say *la ilaha ila Allah* and *Ash hadu anna Muhammadar Rasulullah*. The young Anas repeated this simple but profound declaration of faith clearly and emphatically.

Umm Sulaym's husband was now furious. He shouted at her: "Don't corrupt my son."

"I am not corrupting him," she replied firmly. Her husband then left the house and it is reported that he was set upon by an enemy of his and was killed. The news shocked but apparently did not upset Umm Sulaym greatly.

She remained devoted to her son Anas and was concerned about his proper upbringing. She is even reported to have said that she would not marry again unless Anas approved.

When it was known that Umm Sulaym had become a wid-

ow, one man, Zayd ibn Sahl, known as Abu Talhah, resolved to become engaged to her before anyone else did. He was rather confident that Umm Sulaym would not pass him over for another. He was after all a strong and virile person who was quite rich and who possessed an imposing house that was much admired. He was an accomplished horseman and a skillful archer and, moreover, he belonged to the same clan as Umm Sulaym, the Banu Najjar.

Abu Talhah proceeded to Umm Sulaym's house. On the way he recalled that she had been influenced by the preaching of Musab ibn Umayr and had become a Muslim.

"So what?" He said to himself. "Was not her husband who died a firm adherent of the old religion and was he not opposed to Muhammad and his mission?"

When Abu Talhah reached Umm Sulaym's house he asked and was given permission to enter. Her son Anas was present. Abu Talhah explained why he had come and asked for her hand in marriage.

"A man like you, Abu Talhah," she said, "is not (easily) turned away. But I shall never marry you while you are a kafir, an unbeliever."

Abu Talhah thought she was trying to put him off and that perhaps she had already preferred someone wealthier and more influential. He said to her: "What is it that really prevents you from accepting me, Umm Sulaym? Is it the yellow and the white metals (gold and silver)?" "Gold and silver?"

She asked somewhat taken aback and in a slightly censuring tone. "Yes," he said. She replied, "I swear to you, Abu Talhah, and I swear to God and His Messenger that if you accept Islam, I shall be pleased to accept you as a husband, without any gold or silver. I shall consider your acceptance of Islam as my mahr."

Abu Talhah understood well the implications of her words. His mind turned to the idol he had made from wood and on which he lavished great attention in the same way that important men of his tribe venerated and cared for their personal idols.

The opportunity was right for Umm Sulaym to stress the futility of such idol worship and she went on: "Don't you know Abu Talhah, that the god you worship besides Allah grew from the earth?"

"That's true," he said.

"Don't you feel stupid while worshipping part of a tree while you use the rest of it for fuel to bake bread or warm yourself? (If you should give up these foolish beliefs and practices) and become a Muslim, Abu Talhah, I shall be pleased to accept you as a husband and I would not want from you any sadaqah apart from your acceptance of Islam."

"Who shall instruct me in Islam?" asked Abu Talhah.

"I shall," Umm Sulaym replied.

"How?"

"Utter the declaration of truth and testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Then go to your house, destroy your idol and throw it away." Abu Talhah left and reflected deeply on what Umm Sulaym had said.

He came back to her beaming with happiness. "I have taken your advice to heart. I declare that there is no god but Allah and I declare that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

Umm Sulaym and Abu Talhah were married. Anas, her son, was pleased and the Muslims would say: "We have never yet heard of a mahr that was more valuable and precious than that of Umm Sulaym for she made Islam her mahr."

Umm Sulaym was pleased and delighted with her new husband who placed his unique energies and talents in the service of Islam. He was one of the seventy three men who swore allegiance to the Prophet at the second Pledge of Aqabah.

With him, according to one report, was his wife Umm Sulaym. Two other women, the celebrated Nusaybah bint Kab and Asma bint Amr witnessed Aqabah and took the oath of allegiance to the Prophet.

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Abu Talhah was devoted to the Prophet and took enormous delight in simply looking at him and listening to the sweetness of his speech. He participated in all the major military campaigns. He lived a very ascetic life and was known to fast for long periods at a time. It is said that he had a fantastic orchard in Madinah with date palms and grapes and running water.

One day while he was performing Salat in the shade of the trees, a beautiful bird with brightly colored plumage flew in front of him. He became engrossed in the scene and forgot how many rakats he had prayed. Two? Three?

When he completed the Prayer he went to the Prophet and described how he had been distracted.

In the end, he said: "Bear witness, Messenger of Allah, that I hand over this orchard as a charity for the sake of Allah, the Exalted."

Abu Talhah and Umm Sulaym had an exemplary Muslim family life, devoted to the Prophet and the service of Muslims and Islam. The Prophet used to visit their home. Sometimes when the time of Prayer came, he would pray on a mat provided by Umm Sulaym.

Sometimes also he would have a siesta in their house and, as he slept, she would wipe the perspiration from his forehead. Once when the Prophet awoke from his siesta, he asked: "Umm Sulaym, what are you doing?"

"I am taking these (drops of perspiration) as a barakah (blessing) which comes from you," she replied.

At another time, the Prophet went to their house and Umm Sulaym offered him dates and butterfat but he did not have any of it because he was fasting. Occasionally, she would send her son Anas with bags of dates to his house.

It was noticed that the Prophet, peace be on him, had a special compassion for Umm Sulaym and her family and when asked about it, he replied: "Her brother was killed beside me."

Umm Sulaym also had a well-known sister, Umm Haram, the wife of the imposing Ubadah ibn as-Samit. She died at sea during a naval expedition and was buried in Cyprus. Umm Sulaym's husband, Abu Talhah, also died while he was on a naval expedition during the time of the third Caliph, Uthman, and was buried at sea.

Umm Sulaym herself was noted for her great courage and bravery. During the Battle of Uhud, she carried a dagger in the folds of her dress. She gave water to and tended the wounded and she made attempts to defend the Prophet when the tide of battle was turning against him. At the Battle of Khandaq, the Prophet saw her carrying a dagger and he asked her what she was doing with it. She said: "It is to fight those who desert."

"May God grant you satisfaction in that," replied the Prophet.

In the face of adversity, Umm Sulaym displayed a unique calmness and strength. One of her young sons (Umayr) fell sick and died while her husband was away looking after his orchards. She bathed the child and wrapped him in shrouds. She told others at her home that they should not inform Abu Talhah because she herself wanted to tell him.

Umm Sulaym had another son whose name was Abdullah. A few days after she gave birth, she sent Anas with the baby and a bag of dates to the Prophet. The Prophet placed the baby on his lap. He crushed the dates in his mouth and put some in the baby's mouth. The baby sucked the dates with relish and the Prophet said: "The Ansar are only fond of dates."

Abdullah eventually grew up and had seven children, all of whom memorized the Quran.

Umm Sulaym was a model Muslim, a model wife and mother. Her belief in God was strong and uncompromising. She was not prepared to endanger her faith and the upbringing of her children for wealth and luxury, however abundant and tempting. She was devoted to the Prophet and dedicated her son Anas to his service.

She took the responsibility of educating her children and she played an active part in public life, sharing with the other Muslims the hardships and the joys of building a community and living for the pleasure of God. Her courage and devotion is a wonderful example for us all.





SPANISH CHICKEN



DATE DROP COOKIES

(Makes 3 to 4 dozen)

Date Cookies



Ingredients:

- 1 cup margarine
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 ½ cups sugar
- 2 eggs, well beaten
- 3 ½ cups sifted flour
- ¾ teaspoon baking soda

- 5 Tablespoons milk
- 2 cups chopped dates
- ¾ cup chopped walnuts

Preparation:

1. Combine margarine, salt & vanilla and mix well.
2. Blend in sugar.
3. Add beaten eggs.
4. Mix flour with the baking soda and add to the creamy sugar mixture alternately with the milk. Mix well.
5. Add dates and nuts.
6. Drop from teaspoonful onto un-greased cookie sheet and flatten with a glass covered with a damp cloth.
7. Sprinkle with sugar.
8. Bake at 350 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes.
9. Remove from cookie sheet and cool on cloth or waxed paper.

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds chicken pieces
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 two oz. jar red pimentos
- 2 cups long grain white rice
- 3 cups chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon oregano
- Flour to coat chicken
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- 3 teaspoon cumin powder
- Salt & Pepper
- Oil for frying

Preparation:

1. Cut chicken into pieces, rub with salt & pepper, 1 clove crushed garlic, 1 teaspoon cumin powder, and oregano.
2. Coat with flour and brown in hot oil.
3. Remove to plate after all the chicken is browned and into the same skillet add onions, bell pepper and pimento and saute until onions are golden and somewhat soft.
4. Add in the rest of the garlic, cumin, salt & pepper, chili powder and saute slightly with onion mixture.
5. Add in the raw rice and saute for a minute or two then add in the tomato sauce and chicken stock.
6. Bring to a boil and pour into a 9" x 12" roasting pan or dish.
7. Stir around to evenly distribute rice.
8. Arrange the browned chicken pieces on top of the liquid rice mixture and place in the oven uncovered for 1 ½ hours at 350 degrees.
9. Alternately this can be done on the stove top in a large pan, covered for about 45 minutes on simmer.



The Five Pillars of Islam

Islam has five pillars, like a house.
Can you name them?

1. To say the _____.
2. To _____ five times a day.
3. To _____ in the month of Ramadan.
4. To pay Zakat to the _____.
5. To go on a pilgrimage to _____.

Answers: 1. Shahada, 2. Pray, 3. Fast, 4. Needy, 5. Mecca

Think & Link

1. The _____ was first revealed in Ramadan.
2. During hajj you go to the _____.
3. The prophet _____ could tell the meaning of dreams.
4. _____ is an old name for Mecca.
5. If you have wudu you can make _____.
6. We give _____ to the needy.
7. Read a _____ of the Qur'an when you pray.

Answers: 1. Quran, 2. Kabah, 3. Yusuf, 4. Becca, 5. Salat, 6. Zakat, 7. Surah

Now, unscramble the letters in the **colored** _____ from Think & Link to name a Companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Answer: Abu Bakr

POEMS FOR CHILDREN

by Khadeejah Stephens

Thank You Allah

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

If you thank Me, I will surely increase you [Ibrahim, 14:7].

Thank You Allah for all that you give.
I know sometimes I'm naughty so please forgive.
Please teach me to be good every day,
and let my heart be ready and willing to pray.
Thank You Allah for Your Prophet whom I love,
please raise him in rank in Paradise above.

Two Little Girls

Two little girls playing in the sun
one wore a scarf, the other wore none.
"Why do you wear a scarf?"
asked the one without,
the other little girl said without a doubt,
"Allah loves me to cover my hair
so that little boys won't stand and stare,
when I grow up what I really want to be
is a well dressed Muslim lady like my pretty Mommy."



Remember...To say Bismallah before you eat.

TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

Islamic Software "Alim" 4.5 Multimedia Edition for Windows CD. ISL Software Corp, Silver Spring, MD.



This software provides access to the Qur'an and includes English and Arabic script, Arabic recitation, Hadith and Islamic Law (Fiqh). A vast array of Islamic subjects are covered in addition to historical and biographical information, an Islamic terms dictionary with a "look-up" and "search" that was very easy to use and comprehensive, as well as photographs of Islamic images and art.

The program loaded quickly, then opened with a lovely Qur'anic recitation in the premier window. It then goes directly into the main window with a "Did You Know" tips window. You can close it or ask for more tips. I liked this feature because as you use this software, your proficiency increases. It makes exploring the huge expanse of information fun. The "Welcome to the Alim" window provides the following subject titles within easy clicking...

Qur'an

Qur'an in Arabic & Recitation

Qur'an Comparison & Recitation

A. Yusuf Ali Qur'an Translation & Commentary

M. Picktall Qur'an Translation

Maududi Surah Introductions

ISL Qur'an Subjects

A. Yusuf Qur'an Subjects

Hadith & Fiqh

Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith & Subjects

Sahih Muslim Hadith (Abridged)

Al-Muwatta Hadith

Al-Tirmidhi Hadith (Abridged)

Sunan of Abu-Dawood (Abridged)

Fiqh-us-Sunnah & Subjects

Hadith Qudsi

Prophet Muhammad's Last Sermon

Islam

World of Islam

Introducing Islam

Introduction to Islam

Islamic Images & Pictures

Reference

Islamic History (Chronology)

Biographies of Companions

Islamic Terms Dictionary

A sidebar window allows easy access to the same subjects but under the title of "Books". There are so many well thought out features to this program that I found myself studying Qur'an subjects much longer than I had anticipated just by having so much information right at my fingertips...mousetips?

The Alim lets you study the Qur'an in Arabic along with multiple translations simultaneously. You can link translations and study them in parallel, comparing, and contrasting verses and their interpretations. A really great feature allows you to hear the Holy Qur'an being recited in Arabic as you read it on the screen (this is a great for new Muslims studying Arabic). You can begin with the beautiful Fatiha and recite all the way to Surah Al Nas (Mankind). The Arabic script is artistic and vivid.

Commentaries of noted scholars help explain hard to understand ideas and interpretations. Detailed introductions (including primary subject matter, time, and circumstances of revelation, and important themes) accompany each Surah (Chapter) of the Qur'an.

You can search and study through thousands of the authentic Hadith (sayings and traditions of the Prophet [SAW]) from any of the six different Hadith databases for any questions you may have on any topic discussed in Hadith. Searches can also be done by content, narrator, or subject. You can even find the name of a sahabi (companion of the Prophet [SAW]) when all you might remember is that he was blind!

Both traditional and contemporary Islamic jurisprudence issues can be contemplated with The Alim's Fiqh-us-Sunnah.

Applying Islam to your daily life is attained from stories of the people who lived with the Prophet [SAW]. A chronological history of Islam provides historical information from the birth of the Prophet [SAW] to the modern 20th century.

Searching through the databases whether English or Arabic is fantastic. You can search under a word, phrase, or multiple combinations of words and phrases. Another surprising feature that I admired was the ability of the application to conduct a search for text in a single database, multiple databases that you choose, or all the databases at the same time! This is so well put together that The Alim will even let you start on what it found while it goes on searching behind the scenes for more.

The Alim is definitely a tool to build and enhance your understanding of Islam whether you are a convert to Islam or born into it. With the "copy & paste" capabilities you can directly transfer text without re-typing, avoiding errors, and maintaining accuracy. A zooming feature allows you to see the Arabic characters with precision. There is even a bookmark icon that allows you to quickly tag selected text or articles.

I found The Alim to be very well constructed, easy to use and move around in, replete with information and references, inexpensive, and containing little 'extras' that make a program well-used and enjoyed. I definitely give it a 4 STAR rating!